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The Rev. J. C. Street acknowledges, with thanks, the receipt of the following subscription in aid of the gratuitous publication of the *Chronicle and Index*:—

A. W. Grant, Glasgow, - - £0 5 0

Any one desirous of having for distribution tracts bearing on the various phases of Unitarianism, may have them on applying to the Rev. J. C. Street, 16 Queen's Arcade, Belfast.

We learn with pleasure that Mr. W. Holmshaw, late student of the Home Missionary Board, Manchester, has received and accepted the unanimous invitation of the congregation at Mountpottinger, Belfast, to become their minister, and that he will enter upon his duties the first Sunday in September. We wish him all happiness and prosperity in his ministry.

It is also a matter of satisfaction that the Glenarm congregation has succeeded in obtaining the services of Mr. King, late student of the Home Missionary Board. We hope both the congregation and minister may find comfort and joy in the new relations established between them.

With the beginning of next month all our town congregations, with their various connected institutions, will be in full vigour and activity. The season of comparative rest will be over and that of energetic work will be resumed. May God's blessing rest upon the work and the workers!

In our present number we conclude the long series of Papers contributed by the Rev. J. C. Street on "How I Left Orthodoxy."

"We seek," says *Unity*, "a church creedless, but not aimless; a church that delights in truth and not in falsehood, that is made strong in the purposes of righteousness, that is made loyal by the warmth of love; that dares stand alone by the faith that is in it—faith in the infinite goodness of the Father of Souls, in the eternal sweep of his law, the all-sufficiency of his truth, the omnipresence of his love, and the omnipotence of his right. This creedless church, for which we work, believes in man as the child of infinite possibilities, born into an endless existence. It believes in reason, God's great gift to man; in worship as the gesture of the soul heavenward; in prayer as the wings upon which the soul would soar towards its ideal; in the church as the commonwealth of hearts, that enables men and women to discharge more fully their social relations, that serves to sharpen their intellectual life, and to make more pointed the decisions of conscience. This church believes that the awful anguish of guilt and the sublime joys of innocence are realities more pressing to the human soul than any judgment day of the old theology, or any heaven and hell located in space. This church believes in the continuous creations of God; that he still works in the unfolding, but yet unfinished, universe. It believes that out of the blocks of time the rising walls of eternity are being shaped. It believes that by virtue of struggle and thought, trial, disappointment and sorrow, through valleys of doubt and caves

of fear, along thorny roads, over cross-crowned heights, the children of men are being led up to the tablelands of unclouded light, of unhedged fellowship. It *believes* all this and more, and yet it is *creedless*, because it holds this great faith not as an exaction forced upon all, but as an inspiration sought by each. It is the testimony of the willing soul, not the test of fellowship imposed by a majority."

HOW I LEFT ORTHODOXY.

BY JAMES C. STREET.

"DIVINE LIGHT FOR EVER. INCREASING HAPPINESS, AND ENDLESS GROWTH."

No. 9.—*Continued.*

See what has come to me! I have found peace, comfort, support in my *present life*, and have discarded and broken away from every fear that haunted me, so that life to-day is sunnier, cheerier, more inspiring than it ever was before. I have found myself in the good world of a good God, who is also my Father, and who cares for me equally with all His other children, and makes the laws and methods of His universe work for my welfare and happiness, and co-operate for my growth and peace. I have discovered that I am living among brethren who, like myself, are fed by His bounty and inspired by His goodness; that all are of one blood and lineage; and that the same sublime destiny is in store for them all. It has been made known to me that we are not adrift upon a shoreless ocean and tossing about rudderless over tempestuous waters, but that we are in the ark of God, sailing over a sea whose deeps are known and whose shores are smiling with peace and joy, while our vessel is captained by Him who guides the stars in their courses. And I can look back upon *the past life* of the world without a despairing thought as to any who have lived before me, feeling sure that throughout all ages they have been under the care of a tireless Providence, growing stage by stage, throughout the numberless generations, and climbing steadily towards juster excellence. Order, and law, and love have "kept the field," and man's career has been under the direction of the Master of the universe.

Out of all this has come to me a wealth of hope and joy, which have united to make me feel that life is in itself a benediction, and that all belonging to it is a sure prophetic promise of more blissful realities yet to come.

It is in this spirit, and with this spiritual preparation, that I now stand facing *the future*. I have already told how, through many years, the future was to me a subject of dread; how I should have to meet a terrible avenger; what horrors were in store for myriads of mankind, and what frightful woes were for ever to fire the great chamber of punishment which God had created for the damnation of his rebellious offspring. This was the dreadful skeleton at every feast. It had its hand upon every pleasure, and in its bony grip stifled every joy. In view of this the present life was miserable and awful enough, and the escape from it, to the majority of mankind, was to horrors more ghastly than the mind of man could conceive. But *now* all this had dropped from me, and the very recollection of it seems to be gradually fading away. When, sometimes, some of my occasional hearers who are still in the bondage out of which I have escaped send to me their terrible missives, and assure me that I am being reserved for a greater damnation, a momentary sensation is created which helps to recall the days of my misery; but the next moment I smile at the unreal picture, and find my life here and hereafter lighted up with a love and mercy which drive away every fear, and make the whole landscape of life gleam with heavenly joys.

This *light* shines, and I can *see*. My career hitherto, as I have set forth to you, has been one in which the light has been vouchsafed to me steadily and growingly. The rays of God's great mercy have shone ever more powerfully, and one bit of darkness and gloom after another has been swept away. I am deeply sensible, even amid my keen sense of the blessings which have come to me and my appreciation of the light which has shone within and around me, that not yet are my blessings complete, or my dark places all removed; and I can find a true poet's explanation of the reason, and with fearless spirit

front the problems which he puts before me. He says:—

Not yet I love my God
With undivided heart;
Not yet I tread the heavenly road
With feet that ne'er depart.

Not yet is all thy will
Sweet to this heart of mine;
Not yet I hasten to fulfil
Each dear command of thine.

Not yet thy wondrous ways
I know as I desire;
Not yet upon those glories gaze
To which mine eyes aspire.

Not yet thy tasks divine
Alone my hands employ;
Not yet that presence sweet of thine
Maketh my only joy.

But shall I not one day,
My God, be all thine own;
Rejoicing, all thy will obey,
And do thy works alone?

Will not my joy and love
Be endless and complete,
And all my blessedness above
Flow from thy presence sweet?

T. H. Gill.

But the sense of my present imperfection and want of clearness of vision no longer is a cause of fear and misgiving. I understand that I myself am in the midst of the great upward movement of the race; that I may be tossed to and fro on the great seas of sorrow, and sin, and repentance, but that the tide is rising higher, and my little bit of tempest is being carried as in the hand of Him who guides the storm, and makes the waters obey His will. I know very well that I shall not escape from the billowy experience; my bark must be tossed about, as are the barks of others; but I feel no fear; and I am sustained, not simply by what some men call "the larger hope," but by the unshakable faith that I shall ride safely over the waters, and that I shall reach the haven at last. Now I can look beyond the storm. I am like the sailor who, on board a vessel that is buffetting with a mighty tempest that is sweeping along a broken shore, is sent up on duty to reef a flying sail, and who, gazing out upon the fury-lashed waters, feels the majesty and grandeur of the scene, but whose heart within him sings for joy, because while aloft at his perilious task, in a sudden gleam of light, he catches sight of the distant shore, and in fancy can see the happy homes of his brethren. I can rise out of the many tumults of daily life, and the clang and noise of contending passions, and feel that not far away are the peaceful shores and the blessed mansions, and that a good wise Hand is guiding all things well. There will still be clouds in my sky, and night rains will fall; there will remain for me disappointment and privation, and many of my heart's desires will fail of fulfilment. I, like others, shall have to know what it is to suffer and to cry out in my anguish; but in all this I shall be comforted and upheld by the knowledge that not purposeless, and certainly not wantonly, are these things permitted to be; but that they subserve a higher end; are messengers and ministers of God, obeying His behest and working out His beneficent purposes; and that ere long I myself shall see and understand, and be full of thankfulness. The days of my distrust are gone. I do not feel either in the hands of a tyrant, or of a weak and fitful being, good in intent, but weak of act; on the contrary, I am upheld and cheered by the conviction that all is well and working for the best, and that a Supreme Hand is upon the rudder, and that through every storm I shall be safely guided.

I am no longer left as in the mazes of a bewildering labyrinth, with no clue to lead me safely through; but even amidst the infinite variety and perplexity of life, I have a light which surely guides me, and which falls upon every step I take, so that I need never wander out of my path. At times the tempests of wind beat upon the light, and it seems to be endangered; but then, with Henry Sutton, I can say—

"Sometimes it seems there is no light at all;
I look quite close, because it is so small:
Then all for sorrow do I weep and sigh;
But some one seems to listen when I cry,
And the Light burns up, and I know not why."

From within and without the light equally shines. In my nature, my heart, my spirit, God reveals his light, and the whole outer world of matter glows with His presence. The great words of a living materialist come fittingly to my mind with a meaning deeper than those he ascribes to them:—

"Each sunset sky, the morning dew, the glittering frost, the falling snow, the pattering rain, the laughing rill, the roaring torrent, and the rolling seas, the arctic cold, and the torrid heat, the singing bird and the voice of human song, dream of saint and wisdom and sage,—all, all are father, mother, brother, sister to me: for in every atom of the infinite material universe there inheres the eternal intellect that expresses itself in every change, dissolution, transformation of the unbounded all." In this eternal intellect I see the divine presence, and I understand that He is all the heart or mind of man can desire. Throughout the *Past*—in its countless ages—*Now* in the mighty throbbings of life in the actual *Present*, this great light shines serene and pure, and it makes clear what had been obscure, and shows the pathways along which the universe has moved in order to reach its present development and glory. What must I think and feel and believe about its relation to the *Future?* Can I imagine that such a light can ever be quenched? Is it possible to think that its glory has shone through all the chambers of the long-extended past, and that with more effulgence it pours down its blaze upon the life of to-day, and then think that there is to be some great and eternal eclipse, and that the warring forces of nature are to be left not only without some guiding hand, but to rush blindly through the universe producing ruin and chaos? To me such a supposition is an impossibility. If I had not found the Father; if I were still blindly struggling with the grim old creeds of my earlier days; if an impotent God were seen struggling unavailingly with forces that made successful headway against His will, then it would not only be possible, but it would be both probable and a source of rejoicing that all this might take place. But with my hand in the hand of my Father, with my eyes gazing upwards into His loving face, with my consciousness that He is the guiding Spirit everywhere throughout the past, I can look the unknown future in the face, and feel a profound assurance that evermore His light will shine, brightening unto the perfect day. So it seems to me I can look with unbroken trust towards the divine light that shall shine for ever, and can have an unfaltering faith that, as in the past and present, so in the eternal future, the light of order, love, power, goodness, and wisdom will continue to shine until no darkness shall be left, no region be left unblessed by the life giving-beams, but the whole universe be filled with light.

But in what light will the problem of human happiness appear?

Nothing is more clear to us all than that our career upon earth is marked by a great amount of sorrow and suffering, and that these things visit each lot and every life. The young and the old, the weak and the strong, the evil and the good, sinner and saint alike are subject to these changing conditions. And as we move forward from one experience to another, changing from poverty to riches, from ignorance to knowledge, and from weakness to strength, the conditions of sorrow and suffering go with us, and we cannot escape from them. They change their forms, and they visit us in fresh ways, but they find us out, and by no ingenuity or contrivance can we escape from them. It was so throughout all the past; it is so now; will it be so for ever? Is this suffering an inevitable attendant upon our lives? Must it accompany us wherever we go? Before such questions can be answered others rise up and challenge our reply. What are these sufferings for? What purpose do they actually serve? I use the one word "suffering" to cover everything that causes us pain and discomfort, no matter from whence they may arise. I know how various are the causes of these—that some are from misadventure and thoughtlessness, some from wilful wrong-doing and rebellion against the good, and some from the sweep of the Eternal laws, which bring growth and decay, birth and death, sickness and strength; but whencesoever they come, I sum them all up in the term suffering, and deal with them all in the question, What purpose do they serve? Now, as I read the story of suffering in the light of the new faith into which I have struggled and grown, it does not appear to me to be either an unmitigated evil or to be a thing to be mourned over and afraid

of. It is neither purposeless nor vindictive. Moreover, it is no accident of circumstance or friction of badly adjusted moral machinery. It has its place and function, and works for the perfection of the whole. There was a time when I thought it the result of a downfall in humanity. Now I understand it to be his effort to rise. Then it appeared as the anger of an offended Deity; now I see it to be the method of a Father. It once asserted itself as the outburst of Divine anger against the sins of the world; but now it appears as the method by which God's mysterious providence works in and about us to draw us up to a loftier holiness.

The suffering which comes from misadventure and thoughtlessness serves for our education and enlarged knowledge. We are ignorant, and are striving after knowledge. But, like children learning to walk, we bruise and hurt ourselves again and again. But every bruise teaches us a lesson. We know what will hurt us, and we avoid doing it again. We go close up to our obstacle, and, instead of stumbling against it once more, we look at it carefully, examine it closely, and try to find out how we came in contact with it, why it hurt us, how we could avoid it, whether we could use it, and how it could best serve instead of hurt us? And many of these stumbling blocks have proved themselves to be stepping-stones. Our hindrances, which caused us "suffering," have become our helpers, lifting us up into joy. We do not begrudge the pain we felt. It was hard to bear, and it cost us a good deal of agony, but good came out of it. We found out what we ought not to try to do, what we could not do, and how our obstacles could be made our servants. To suffer in such a cause was useful instead of harmful. The method was severe; but the lesson had to be learned, and being learned in such a way, it was not likely to be forgotten. The sufferings which came from sin were sharp and terrible enough. Close on the heels of the crime came the suffering. There was no escaping it. In the very act of wrong-doing itself was enclosed the sting that punished us. There was no evading it, no playing with it. Nobody could take the moral guilt which belonged to us, and nobody could rescue us from the penalty which it brought. If we thought it was easy to cheat the avenger, and play fast and loose with consequences, or if we thought we could play hide-and-seek with conscience, and dodge the Divine laws, we soon found out our mistake and learned the invariable and inevitable law that all wrong involves suffering, that sin brings pain, that there is no escape from the Divine agencies for the moral well-being of the world. And as this lesson was learned, what followed? I was not slow, in my judgment, that suffering thus brought about was not only just and inevitable, but that it was good and merciful. I saw that it was meant for a good end, that it worked for my welfare, that it was God's merciful method of teaching me that the way of transgressors is hard, and that there can be no real and lasting happiness that is not based upon righteousness. I used to think of punishment as merely inflicted to cause pain; now I saw that the pain itself was remedial, and that it was meant, not to give me misery merely, but a misery which would enable me to escape it for ever. I prayed to be delivered from my punishment. I asked that my burdens should be cast upon the Lord. I thought I believed in the doctrine of substitution. I now found how utterly mistaken all this was;—that to be relieved from punishment was not only impossible, but that, even if it had been possible, it would have left me uncleansed by its fires; that I should still be struggling in the mire and disorder of sin, without any true lessons learned, or any growth in spiritual strength and manhood, and that my appeal for some one else to bear the consequences of my transgression was a meanness and cowardliness of spirit unworthy of a man, and below the dignity of a son of God. And so it came to me that the suffering which came from sin was not only useful to my higher life, but was a part of that progressive plan of God for the elevation of His children which I had already seen working out such divine results in the education and advancement of the world.

The same discovery awaited me when I came upon suffering which came from the sweep of

the eternal laws. All these I saw moved under the influence of a beneficent will, and when once understood and complied with led only to peace and joy. I no longer felt that they were alien or hostile forces, or forces that blindly swept on, obeying a blind and callous will, but beneficent agencies, directed by a perfect will for a perfect purpose, in order to accomplish a perfect end.

I was now, therefore, prepared to go back to my earlier questions:—Is this suffering an inevitable attendant upon our lives? Must it accompany us wherever we go? and will it, if it must go with us, add to or detract from the sum of our happiness?

I had already found that suffering was disciplinary, educative, and good, making us strong to resist, wise to know when and how to resist, and beneficial to our moral and spiritual natures. I had also discovered that, though it was sharp and severe, it exercised a cleansing influence, and made my nature stronger and purer. It brought me into the deep shadows, but surely, when it was over, it also led me into clearer light, and enabled me all the more intensely to enjoy the glorious contrast.

I must say—though, of course, I could not be positive in conclusions, and dogmatically affirm what I only conjectured—that it did seem to me most likely that so long as we were struggling towards perfection, and until we had actually reached it, suffering would attend our lives. I know that it is always through tribulation that any soul enters the Kingdom of God; and every time we gain some new moral victory we enter some new province of God's Kingdom. And this, it seems to me, will continue to be the case. Suffering is a condition of progress. We are always being born into new spiritual worlds, and new birth always means new discipline. But suffering is only an incident. Through its agency our natures become finer, more able to appreciate the lights and joys of existence, and so go on rising to loftier enjoyments. It will not detract from the sum of our happiness, but, step by step, it will add thereto. So I look to the *future* to continue the work of the *past*. Through myriads of ages man's life and character have been slowly evolved—up from the monad to the complex and wonderful being who is the child of God; and every step he has taken has led to an increase of his capacity of enjoyment and his ability to appreciate the blessings which are showered around his path. Will not this continue? I am not apprehensive that the order of the world will change, or that God's dealings with His creatures will be revolutionized because man dies and enters into a new state, and therefore I look with unclouded eyes into the mighty future and see the wonderful growth and procession of man from one joy to another up towards the perfect happiness of heaven. If anything is clear to me it is this, that God has charged Himself with the care of man's welfare and happiness, and therefore I cannot doubt that these will increase from age to age, and continue until the remotest bounds of the universe will resound with the glad songs of blessed souls. So that in the divine light I look to see increasing happiness.

Now all this implies that as now, so hereafter there will be no stationaryness. I used to think that when the good man died he went to heaven, and instantly found himself in a condition of unbroken and unchanging happiness. All were to be equally happy, equal sharers of the blessedness there, and there was to be no change for ever. The condition was one stereotyped by the hand of God. But now I could no longer accept this view of the world beyond the grave. I read its features by the light of past history, of present experience, and of the law of progress which both revealed. Growth was the law of the past. I saw it at work everywhere. I saw it in the personal life of man. I saw it in the development of humanity, and amid all this growth I saw no man, no nation, no class of men perfect. They passed out of one imperfection after another; but they were endlessly putting forth new feelers towards better things. Even the grandest types of men—those of most wondrous culture of head and heart—who, with their feet amid the common roads of life, seemed ever to climb towards the stars—the saints, prophets, and saviours of mankind. I saw precisely the same yearnings, gropings, and efforts still after nobler things. None were complete. None were satisfied. All were consciously reaching forward to a better and diviner state. And this attitude of theirs was in perfect keeping with the attitude of the whole human race. Ever upwards, ever onwards was its motto, and its history revealed new stages in its growth. I could not think that all this was to have a sudden and final ending at death. God was the same. His laws were the same. Neither He nor they were changed by the changed condition of His children; and therefore I look for growth in the future corresponding to the growth of the past. I appreciate fully the words of Theodore Parker:—"I cannot believe that any state in heaven is a final state, only a condition of progress. The bud opens into the blossom, the flower matures into the

fruit. The salvation of to-day is not blessedness enough for to-morrow. Here we are, first, babes of earth, with a few senses, and those imperfect, helpless, ignorant; then children of earth; then youths; then men, armed with reason, conscience, affection, piety, and go on enlarging these without end. So, methinks, it must be there; that we shall be, first, babes of heaven; then children; next youths; and so go on growing, advancing, advancing—'Our being only a becoming more and more, with no possibility of ever reaching the end. If this be true, then there must be a continual increase of being. So, in some future age, the time will come when each one of us shall have more mind, and heart, and soul, than Christ on earth; more than all men now on earth have ever had; yes, more than they and all the souls of men now passed to heaven; shall have, each one of us, more being than they all have had; and so more truth, more soul, more faith, more rest, and bliss of life."

Thus, out of all my reasonings and experience I distilled the divine essence of endless growth. The future of humanity had the universe for its theatre, God for its ideal, and growth for its method. Heaven itself was subject to growth, and the happiness it gave grew as its inhabitants expanded in nature.

The vision is one of glorious proportions and colourings, and presents a dazzling picture of the boundless and progressive life of man—no going backwards, no needless pains, no dreary wastes, no godless regions, no forgotten children, but movement ever towards greater perfection; suffering distilled into ever greater joy; the whole universe smiling under the sunshine of God, and every creature rejoicing in His love and blessedness. Divine light for ever. Increasing happiness, and endless growth.

Thus, my friends, have I led you step by step along the road by which I have travelled into my present position. You have seen how my spiritual life commenced, and what have been its surroundings at the successive periods of my career. If you have followed me carefully, you have also seen that I have never wantonly or in a rude and offensive way broken from the past. I have tender and affectionate remembrances of the care and oversight exercised towards me in the various stages of my growth by good and loving friends, and I have borne my testimony to their piety, zeal, and faith. When I parted from them one by one, it was not with a light heart, as if I were about to take a holiday journey, but as a sad and earnest pilgrim who takes his staff in his hand, knowing there are hard and perilous journeys before him, and that he shall never probably meet again those from whom he is parting, but saying his farewells with tears, and yet turning his eyes fixedly in the direction which conscience tells him he must travel. I have known the sorrow of many separations, and the bitterness of many misunderstandings; but I had no choice if I was to be true to my better self, and obedient to the voice of God. It has been no easy thing to break away from the past; to part from friends; to leave behind me those with whom I went up to the house of God in company; to pass from the crowded assemblies, the social circles, the pleasant courtesies, and to make my way alone; to stand at my own life-corner fighting for my own idea of truth; to hear myself denounced; to know that I was giving good men and women pain; to be assured that I was lost; to be persecuted; to be attacked; and after all to find myself one of a few who stand aside from the crowd, looked upon as dangerous heretics, denounced as infidels, classed as atheists, and avoided as pests. This is not easy, and men do not take such a position readily or with light hearts. I see about me many who have reached similar conclusions to my own, who like myself are utterly out of harmony with the current teachings of the churches and creeds, but who will not face the obloquy, the isolation, the denunciations which follow those who take the bold step of publicly breaking away from the past, and boldly attaching themselves to the persecuted few. I am not going out of my way to blame these. I am not master of their consciences. They have no account to give to me. To their own Master they stand or fall. But I have had to take my course, and others like me have had to take theirs. To our light we had to be obedient. God called us, and we obeyed. And in doing this we knew where we were going, and what we were about to face so far as friends and the world were concerned. But there was something we did not know. We did not know how this obedience would be rewarded. We did not know how the sufferings through which we should have to pass would distil for us a priceless joy. We did not know to what exalted regions we should be led; what new truths would be revealed to us; what mountain height of thought and holiness would be made possible. We did not know how the shadows, and horrors, and wars which had haunted us would pass away. What a clear shining of the face of God we should see; what prospects would open out before us; what joys would be made known; and what love would be revealed. All these things have come in the course of the journey; but when we turned aside from the beaten track it was with no idea that we should soon find ourselves in such blessed spiritual landscapes.

For myself I can unhesitatingly speak. Not only have I no sense of regret and sorrow that I left the orthodoxy of my earlier years, but I cannot find words enough wherewith to thank my God for the light, and love, and hope He has revealed to me. Not for a thousand worlds would I go back to my old fears and beliefs.

I would not, for anything that could be offered, exchange the peace and inspiration I have found for the misery and hopelessness out of which I have struggled. Good and pious people, who know nothing of my history and the process of my thought and life, may denounce me or pray for me; may avoid me or remonstrate with me; but I have within that which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away. I am out of the shadows; I am a freeman; I understand my sonship to God; I see opening out before me endless vistas of development; I am among my brethren; I join in the process of the ages; I go forward to endless and growing life; I have no fears about God or eternity; no doubts about man or destiny; I move in a glorified world towards worlds more glorious still. The springs of perpetual inspiration refresh my soul; the hopes which God has implanted within me are ever ripening to fulfilment; I move in the formost files of time. No new truths that can be revealed will shake my faith; truth and goodness, and the sanctities of life are the very aims of my being. Wheresoever and howsoever they come, they are welcome as sunlight after storm. I hail their advent. I reach out my very heart to welcome them. The dead husks of old creeds fall from me. The garment belonging to my childhood and youth are laid aside. My spiritual limbs are of larger growth, and need more space. I am enfranchised in God's free universe. Tell me not of your creeds, your authorities, your books, your mysteries, your presents. I have left them all behind me. I am in a new world, I go from truth to beauty, from beauty to holiness, from holiness to God. And I go forward with a cheerful confidence that I shall realize and understand the dream of him who dreamed on Patmos:—

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

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